

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NEW TARGET FOR HIV/AIDS - WOMEN AND ADULTS AGES 47-65

**SAN BERNARDINO.** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections continue at high levels, with an estimated 56,300 Americans becoming infected each year. Additionally, more than 18,000 people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) still die each year in the United States.

While major strides have been made in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, the disease continues its devastating effects on all sectors of American society. The impact however, has become increasingly more serious among women and adults between the ages of 47-65.

The CDC reports that in 2007 more than a quarter of HIV diagnoses in the United States were among women and girls aged 13 years and older. Women are more likely to be infected through sex with a male partner. Minority women continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV infection. The rate of new HIV infections for African American women is nearly 20 times the rate for white women. The rate of new HIV infection among Hispanic women is nearly four times that of white women. In San Bernardino County, African American and Hispanic women together accounted for 83% of HIV diagnoses among women in 2009 and 14% of all HIV diagnoses.

Many factors contribute to the increasing rates of HIV infection in adults aged 47-65. One contributing factor is that older adults have often been overlooked by targeted education and prevention messages. Sexually active adults between 47-65 years of age may use condoms less often due to a lower concern of pregnancy, thereby increasing their risk for HIV. The use of sexual enhancement medications among this age group also contributes to the increased risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections, including HIV. Further, the lack of communication between adults and their doctors regarding sexual practices contributes to a perceived low HIV risk among this group and a lack of testing. In 2008 adults 50 years of age and older represented 17 percent of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States, Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, Health Officer, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health attributes this to "the simple reason that older people don't get tested for HIV on a regular basis."

Although HIV is a manageable disease, education and prevention continue to be the ultimate goal in stopping the spread of infection among all groups, especially women and adults ages 47-64. It is important to be aware of specific challenges faced by women and adults ages 47-64 and to ensure that they are informed and know how to protect themselves from infection. Dr. Ohikhuare states that, "Testing is key in HIV prevention and I encourage everyone to make HIV testing part of

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their routine medical care.”

For more information about HIV/AIDS and testing, call the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health AIDS Program at (800) 255-6560, or visit the website at [www.KnowSBC.com](http://www.KnowSBC.com).

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